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Some companies make games; some companies make games that spark revolutions which burn through the video game industry and leave it with an indelible brand. Loth as we Mac-fanatics are to admit it, id software is just such a company, and Quake is just such a game.

That's because Quake isn't just a game—it is an all-encompassing experience. Featuring an incredibly flexible graphics engine and a modular data system that allows for extensive modifications, Quake is merely the starting point for an amazing array of gaming experiences, from racing go-karts to MechWarrior-style battles to paintball to capture-the-flag.

And now, finally, after more than a year of agonized waiting, Quake has come to the Power Macintosh. Ported by now-defunct Lion Entertainment and published by MacSoft, the new kings of the Mac OS gaming scene, Quake has made it to our side of the woods, and has gained many Mac-specific features and options in the process.

Speed

This is the inevitable question, so I might as well get it out of the way; no matter how long of a list of Quake's features I presented you with, I'd always get the same answer: "Yeah—but is it fast? Will it run on my machine?"

Well, yes and no. Quake is one of those games that will use up every available resource your system has and then greedily ask for more. The combined strain of a true-3D engine, ambient lighting effects, polygonal monsters, sophisticated AI and 16-player netplay can (and regularly does) bring even a 200-MHz monster machine to its knees. High-rez play (640x400) of the kind that Marathon Infinity and Duke Nuke'em players are used to is almost impossible even on incredibly powerful machines—full screen hi-rez is occasionally stuttery even on 200 MHz MMX Pentium machines, as well as my PowerCenter Pro 240.

The reason the answer is “yes and no” is that Quake *is* playable on even the lowest-end Power Macintosh, provided you are willing to make a few sacrifices, such as turning on low-rez graphics, reducing screen size and forgetting all about network play. If you aren't willing to make those sacrifices, then Quake is not playable on the low end of the Power Macintosh scale. Personally, I would not recommend playing this game with anything less than a 120 MHz 604-based machine with 32 MB of RAM, MacSoft's generous recommendations aside.

ut Quake isn't playable on low-end PC's either—this is a game that was literally written ahead of its time; a game that can put brand-new systems to shame even though it is a year older than they are. I don't know a serious Quake player on the PC side who has anything less than a 200 MHz Pentium monster machine with a hardware 3D card.

Considering the complexity of this game and the drag of the Mac OS on overall system speed, I think Lion Entertainment did an admirable and efficient job in porting Quake to the Macintosh. The speed on mid-range machines is excellent, and quite playable. The networking code is clean and fast enough to allow Mac gamers to compete with PC players

on PC servers without any handicap. And if you have a high-end machine or hardware acceleration such as the TechWorks' Power3D card (reviewed in this issue) then Quake is really going to blow you away.

Quake for the Unwashed Masses

Unless you have been doing your computing from a locked cell deep inside the Carlsbad caverns, or just automatically screen out anything that has to do with "other" platforms, you already know what Quake is and what it is about. Nevertheless, a quick synopsis for those not up to speed: Quake is a first-person 3D shooter with true 3-D polygonal graphics, intelligent AI, hardware acceleration support and an extensible architecture that allows for many modifications and specialized scripting.

What is true 3D? Unlike Marathon (all three) or Duke Nuke'em, all of the "characters" in Quake are true 3-D models composed of texture-mapped polygons, which means you can view them from any angle or side (including almost straight up or down) and they will show correct perspective. Quake also supports true bridges, angled floors, walls, and ceilings, and even "unattached" polygons such as stairs hanging in empty space. Scripting allows for advanced enemy intelligence, automated traps and pitfalls, and certain "ambient events" that enhance the game experience (like Zombies dropping out of the ceiling when you press a switch.)

The game engine itself has some very nice touches, such as panning stereo sound that gets softer and louder according to distance; true dynamic lighting (calculated per-pixel rather than per-surface like in Marathon or Descent); an eye-popping real time distortion effect when underwater; and each monster has a randomized set of sounds, to give them a little personality.

The Quake engine also supports hardware 3D acceleration, either from a 3Dfx-based card such as the TechWorks Power3D (see review in this issue) or a QuickDraw 3D RAVE compliant card. Hardware acceleration adds 16-bit color, smooth textures, gorgeous lighting, real-time shadows and a dozen more features, plus speed, speed, speed. A hardware 3D card is going to be a mandatory addition to any serious gamer's system within the next year, and Quake alone is a reason to consider buying one of these cards.

Brawn, Not Brains

There is no compelling plot or storyline to this game, nor are there "terminals" such as in Marathon or cutscenes (a la Dark Forces) to help the action along; you just kill everything in sight and get the keys or press the buttons in the correct order to move you to the next level. Ostensibly you are a space marine (sound familiar?) who returns to his base only to find that it is occupied by mutant versions of your fellow soldiers, and that a supernatural entity named Quake is coming through the teleportation "slipgates" and taking over. To "win" the game you have to go through the gates deep into Quake's domain, collecting runes to arm yourself for a final battle with . . . well, if you get there, you will see.

The Quake solo game is long, complex, and often frustrating, but also quite beautiful in spots. There is no "map" view of any kind, nor a motion sensor, so finding your way around a dark maze is as scary as it is complicated. Without any terminals or signposts to guide your way, it is often tough to find that next key or keycard to open that locked door barring your way. There are also extensive liquid areas and underwater passages where care must be taken to come to the surface every so often, or you will "sleep with the fishes."

Quake solo play redeems itself with the map design: huge, intricate, complex, and deeply layered, the buildings in Quake actually feel like true castles and fortresses, complete with drawbridges, moats, dungeons and courtyards. Arched ceilings, subterranean pools,

flickering torches and soft-shadowed lighting really add to the atmosphere and feel of the game. Ambient sounds and the characteristic grunts, growls and snorts of your enemies generate plenty of paranoia as you struggle to find a way to heal your war-torn body before your next encounter.

Many Marathon fans have complained that the color palette of Quake is limited to green and brown; this is in some ways a valid critique, but the colors of Quake are limited for technical reasons (to increase game speed) as well as aesthetic ones. Marathon's colors are almost psychedelic, painfully bright compared to the subdued earthtones of Quake. It is all a question of atmosphere, and Quake's colors work for me, though they may not satisfy someone raised on Marathon alone.

The Monsters

I'm not going to go into detail here, because information about the Quake monsters is so easily available online, but the artificial intelligence of these beasts is worth mentioning. A bit smarter than the ones in Marathon, they have more finesse this time around; several of them are smart enough to find a doorway and wait in ambush, or peek around a corner to fire a grenade at you. Not quite at the level of Descent II opponents (who actually move to avoid your fire), the Quake monsters are still challenging foes, and all of them have long distance attacks and move in characteristic ways.

The fact that these monsters are polygon models instead of bitmaps makes encounters more complex: you can sneak up behind them, rain grenades down on them from above, and it takes them time to turn and aim. It is still fairly easy to figure out a particular monster's weakness and exploit it, but that is true of any AI I've played so far: computers just aren't that smart.

Quake has enough solo play to keep even a serious gamer busy for months; then, when you're finished with that, you can go out and buy one of the half-dozen expansion packs or start downloading solo maps from the Internet for a virtually endless experience.

Quake, Rattle, Roll

But solo play is only half the story, so to speak. Quake is also an amazing network game, featuring complex levels, devastating weapons and fast, furious action. Supporting up to 16 players simultaneously over IPX (Ethernet or PPP), Appletalk (Ethernet or LocalTalk) or TCP/IP (direct connect or PPP), Quake quickly becomes a gory, furiously fast and often terrifying netgame.

Quake net levels tend to be multi-layered and twisty, unlike the "arena"-style maps common with Marathon, and there are plenty of shadows to hide in and corners to get trapped in. You "run" about twice the speed of a Marathon player, and there is no reload time for your weapons, so the action is pretty much constant with a decent number of players. The ability to have true bridges, tunnels and teleportation gates within the map allow for some very complex playfields indeed, and strategy plays a role as well: if you know the map cold and memorize where the weapons reappear, you can be a fearsome opponent even if you are a bit slower on the draw than the others.

The Inevitable

Right about now I should get another inevitable question out of the way. I can just hear the indignant Bungie-philes saying "Are you saying Quake is better than Marathon?" with an incredulous sneer. No, I am not saying that at all—Quake is just different, not better or worse. Both styles of netplay, Quake's kill-everyone-now nonstop gore-fest or Marathon's more cerebral, plotting-your-attack-while-watching-the-motion-sensor approach each speak

to a different style of gaming and a different attitude. I play both Marathon Infinity and Quake and I love them both equally, for different reasons. Quake offers certain networking options that Marathon does not, such as TCP/IP play, but Marathon has such nicely balanced weapons and such a polished feel that it is still a joy to play.

So there.

[The Technical Issues](#)

You already know that Quake really needs a powerful system to be playable, but there are several other things to consider when you throw netplay into the mix. I've been getting you all excited about Quake deathmatches, but the reality is a little sobering.

First off, you are going to want the fastest connection possible between systems. For a local network, you'll want Ethernet; for Internet play, a T1 (or at the least dual channel ISDN or ADSL) is needed for reliable, serious game play.

Even with a 56k connection, playing TCP/IP over modem (with PPP) just doesn't cut it. Don't worry, it's the same on the PC side as well. The Internet was just not designed with real-time network games in mind. Its "switched packet" setup makes streaming data over the 'net very difficult, as anyone who has tried RealAudio or videoconferencing over a modem connection can testify.

have played some decent netgames with 56k Flex (connecting at 48000) over PPP, but I'd say four out of five games were practically unplayable, with so much "lag" (delay time between keypress and action) that I was stumbling around like a drunk and getting shot all to hell in the process. Note that this does depend very much on your local ISP, phone line, and a dozen other factors—some might be able to play decent Internet games with 28.8 for all I know. Having a local server (hosted by your own ISP, ideally) can really make a difference in net games. Conversely, joining a server in Holland isn't going to help game speed any.

There is a thing on the PC side called QuakeWorld, a modified version of Quake designed to address the “lag” related issues of Internet play; unfortunately, this was not ported to the Mac, and is not likely to be ported in the future. QuakeWorld was a freeware release created by volunteer programmers who are not likely to release the source code to anyone looking to make a profit out of it, so unless MacSoft agrees to port QuakeWorld and then give it away, we will have to do without.

[Mac Perks, Anyone?](#)

That year we missed without Quake did have some benefits: we get Quake in a mature phase, with tons of servers, third-party maps and add-ons available.

We also got lots of nifty Mac-only features, lovingly added by Bruce Burkhalter of Lion, who polled people on the Mac Usenet groups for ideas and suggestions on Mac-ifying the interface.

To run an add-on or map on the PC side requires all sorts of arcane command-line arguments and special modifications, especially under DOS. On the Mac side, it is all drag-and drop and the friendly, familiar open/save dialogs we are used to. Just drop a folder containing a custom map or modification onto the Quake app, and you are off!

We also gained a very nice, Mac-like Options screen with flexible settings for video, sliders for audio features and intuitive key-assignment options. Included in this is full InputSprockets support, so your favorite joystick or mouse will work flawlessly.

he Video Options available to Mac Quakers are just amazing—an intuitive dialog allows you to actually drag the game screen to the precise size you want it, and can take advantage of monitor resolutions up to 1024x768. To get similar results with DOS Quake, you'd have to type ridiculous things like "quake -width 512 height 384 windowed" and have to quit and restart to change your video options.

Bugs

With any first release, there are going to be a few bugs. As of this review Quake is already up to version 1.08.3, but there are a few issues still to be dealt with.

Modem-to-modem play does not work, and is disabled; TCP/IP play cannot resolve server names such as "quake.infocad.com" but will resolve the IP number equivalent (i.e. 207.19.74.30).

I had few crashes, but others have reported serious instability, particularly with TCP/IP networking. These seem to be bus-related errors (type 10) and may be due to bad RAM or caches, Open Transport bugs or any number of sources.

Quake RAVE is a serious disappointment, but then again, so is all RAVE acceleration so far. No card available for the Mac today has enough power to make RAVE accelerated games playable, though that may change by November with the coming of the Rage Pro chipset. Anyone with an Xclaim VR or a Mac with an ATI 3D chipset is going to be severely disappointed in Quake RAVE performance, but that is because the RAGE II chips are extremely weak and pathetic. Quake RAVE is also quite buggy, with numerous pauses and halts, stuttering sound, and occasional crashes on quit.

The game documentation itself is pretty slim, and could use a lot more information about downloading and launching third-party maps and modifications, as well as more info about Internet play. Otherwise, it looks nice and is Mac-specific.

Player Tries to Put the Pin Back In

If you like first-person shooters, buy this game. If you have a decent set of hardware, buy this game. If you want to get the wits scared out of you, buy this game and play it in the dark with headphones on and the volume all the way up. Whatever you do, make sure you do it after buying this game.

Was it worth the wait? I think so. Is it a good port? I think it is just about the best we could have gotten, and a fitting cap to Lion's career on the Macintosh platform.

In short: buy this game, get out there on the 'net, and score a few frags for the Mac OS! Look for me on a server near you, as "FearSym," and may your rocket ammo never run dry!

Pros

- Classic game
- Extra Mac options
- Good speed
- Highly flexible video options

Cons

- A few bugs
- Documentation a little slim

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